C&I 508.01: Sociology of Education

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Course Purpose and Overview
This course examines the various roles played by schools in society. We will explore various theoretical frameworks that have informed the sociology of education and discern their impact on formal education. We will examine questions related to the organizational features of schools, school relationships to other societal institutions, and the role schools play in socializing our youth. We will consider the role of the school in social inequality and explore some current trends and their anticipated impact on student opportunities. While the course will primarily focus on U.S. issues, it will be grounded in a comparative perspective in order to show our connections with other nations.

Class activities will vary from lectures to open discussions to small group dialogues to student presentations. Students will be active participants in the course. You are encouraged and expected to ask questions, raise issues, and otherwise contribute to an informed and substantive classroom discussion. Assigned readings are to be read prior to class sessions and will be the primary focus of each class.

As I teach, I try to be aware of the special needs of individuals as well as the needs of the group. If you require some accommodation, I encourage you to discuss that with me. Please make use of e-mail or call me to discuss assignments or the content of the course. I would be happy to meet with you before or after our class sessions, if that would fit your schedule better.

Required Texts


A faculty pack of readings is available at Denny’s Copy Shop at 2330 S. Higgins Ave. (Higgins & South Ave.)

Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria
Written assignments are double-spaced, printed on a letter-quality printer, and due during class on the days indicated below. Late work will be penalized one grade per day. Use APA (5th Edition), Chicago or MLA documentation where appropriate in your written work. I determine grades by a careful judgment of each assignment against a set of criteria, as indicated for that assignment. In the papers, you should demonstrate that you understand the major issues at stake in the particular area. Your paper should be significantly more than simply a summary of the reading. The papers should be critical and analytical, searching for points of contention or agreement among the different authors. You are expected to note key points and discuss the broader implications. All
papers are also evaluated according to the quality of writing. Excellent work earns a point value between 92-100%; good work, 84-91%; fair work, 76-83%; and any work judged to be less than fair in quality is returned for student revision. If a student desires to revise a paper, this must be completed in a short period of time to be determined by both the student and the professor. For any revised work, the grades will be averaged.

**Academic Honesty**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://ww.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://ww.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321).

**Written/Oral Requirements for the course include:**

1. **Theory Reflection Paper:** For this assignment, you will choose one sociological theory as presented in the readings to discuss. Possible choices include: functionalism, conflict theory, interpretive theories, or critical theory. Using deMarrais and LeCompte as your starting point, complete the following:
   - describe the main viewpoint of this theory;
   - explore the contribution this theory has made to the knowledge base about how schools work;
   - support your ideas with reference to the readings in class and others that are appropriate;
   - describe your reaction to this theory. How does it support or counter your understanding of education? What value does this theory have for you?

Limit your paper to 2-3 double-spaced, typed pages. Evaluation will be based on clarity in writing including spelling and grammar, thought and support given to your remarks, and inclusion of the items listed above. This assignment is worth a maximum of 20 points and is due Sept. 12.

2. **Schooling Issues Reflection Paper:** For this paper you will select a few (1-2) articles or chapters from Brint, Meier, or the faculty pack to discuss. Your task is to select a few key points or concepts that are evident in your selected readings. In essence, you will describe the common theme(s) and each author’s viewpoint. Summarize the main idea(s) presented and then provide your reaction to the statements. Half of the paper should summarize the key points made by the authors, and half should be your personal remarks. Consider the following questions to guide your reflection:
   - What are the key themes presented and how do the authors’ viewpoints support or counter one another?
   - How did these key points impact your thinking about the given topic?
   - How is this a significant issue for education today?
   - What questions were raised for you upon reading the articles/chapters?
   - What quote was meaningful to you and why?

Keep the reactions focused, but provide depth in your reflections. This paper is intended to provide you an opportunity to reflect on specific points, but is not intended to be a research paper.

Criteria for evaluation will be based upon:
• ability to clearly summarize key points of the article(s),
• ability to make personal connections or reflections pertaining to the topic under discussion,
• depth of discussion,
• clarity in writing, appropriate spelling, grammar, etc.

Limit your paper to 2-3 type written pages. This assignment is worth a maximum of 20 points and is due Oct. 3.

3. **Midterm:** This will be a take-home exam asking you to answer essay questions pertaining to the readings and class discussions. You may have some additional research to complete the project. You will receive the questions two weeks in advance of the due date. The midterm is worth a maximum of 45 points. Due Oct. 31.

4. **Book Review:** For this assignment you will select an appropriate book related to the field of sociology of education to critique and review. A list of books will provided early in the semester, but students may choose other books not included on the list. You may want to consider books listed in the bibliography of Meier’s *In Schools We Trust*. In the review, you will do the following:
   • summarize the main points of the book;
   • note the strengths and weaknesses of the work;
   • discuss implications of the points made by the author(s);
   • provide your own reaction to the content of the book; and
   • use course readings to support your remarks.

Limit the paper to 6-8 double-spaced typed pages. Evaluation will be based on clarity in writing including spelling and grammar, organization of ideas, thought given to remarks, and inclusion of the items listed above. The book review is worth a maximum of 55 points. Due Nov. 21.

5. **Book Talk:** You will provide a brief synopsis of the book you reviewed and engage class members in a short discussion. You may choose to present the work in a poster session format, powerpoint format, or with handouts. Some visual representation of key points is strongly encouraged. Limit your talk to 10-15 minutes. Depending on class numbers, book talks may be presented in small groups via a poster session approach.

Evaluation will be based on effective summation of the main points of your book, clarity in presentation, and your ability to stimulate and engage the audience. This assignment is worth a maximum of 15 points.

6. **Final Project:** You will complete a take-home final project that will ask you to make connections to the readings and discussions throughout the semester. In addition, you may complete an in-class portion of the final to be determined by class members and the professor. The final project will is worth a maximum of 30 points and is due December 12.
7. **Participation**: You will be asked to prepare for class sessions as well as to contribute in class activities and discussions. Some class participation may include brief Blackboard discussions. Class participation will be evaluated on the following:
   - faithful attendance and appropriate contributions to class discussions;
   - appropriate participation in small group activities;
   - completion of readings and assignments prior to class meetings.

I will ask you for your own self-assessment of participation at the end of the course. I will incorporate your input when determining your participation grade. Participation is worth a maximum of 15 points.

**Assessment Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Grading System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory Reflection</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
<td>A (95-100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Issues Ref.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>A- (92-94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td>B+ (90-91%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>B (87-89%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Talk</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>B- (84-86%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>C+ (81-83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>C (78-80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

205 total

C- (76-77%)

D (68-75%)

**Tentative Sequence of Topics and Reading Assignments:**

**Aug. 29** Introduction to the Course

**Sept. 5** Sociology of Education: Key Theories and Overview of Field of Study
   What guides the field of sociology of education?

**Readings**
   *Brint chp. 1
   
   *Fac Pack
   

**Assignment-** Explore the Education Week website [www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org) and Public Agenda (go to education section) at [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org).

**Sept. 12** Schooling: Differences between industrial and developing countries. Demographics in U. S. Education

**Readings**
   *Brint chp. 2-3
   
   *Fac Pack
   

**Assignment-** Theory Reflection due
Sept. 19  The role of public schools: What should it be?

Readings
* Fac Pack


Sept. 26  Great Schools: What factors contribute to their success?

Readings
* Meier chp 1-2

* Fac Pack


Oct. 3  Parents and Schools: How can we create meaningful partnerships?

Readings
* Meier chp 3

* Fac Pack


**Assignment- Schooling Issues Reflection due**

**Oct. 10**  
**School as Organization: Sociology of Teaching**  
**Readings**  
*Brint, chp. 8  
* Meier chp.4

*Fac Pack  


**Oct. 17**  
**Schools and Socialization**  
**Transmission of culture and knowledge**  
**Readings**  
*Brint chp. 4-5  
*Meier chp. 5

**Oct. 24**  
**Schools and Social Selection: Social Class and Ethnicity**  
**Readings**  
*Brint chp. 6-7

**Oct. 31**  
**Schools and Social Selection: Race and Ethnicity**  
**Readings**  
*Fac Pack  


**Assignment- Midterm due**
Nov. 7    Holiday Election Day    No Classes

Nov. 14   Social Selection: The role of tests and standardization
Readings
*Meier chp. 6-8

*Fac Pack

**Book presentations**

Nov. 21   Schools and Social Selection: Gender
Readings
*Fac Pack


**Book presentations**

Assignment - Book Review due

Nov. 28   Reform Movements: What can we expect for the future?
Readings
*Brint, chp. 9

*Fac Pack

**Book presentations**

Dec. 5    Reform Movements: What is your vision of public schools?
Readings
*Meier, chp. 9-10

**Book presentations**

Dec. 12   Wrap-up of the course
Final Project  5:30-7:30 PM